

## ANNAMITE CIVILIZATION

an obligation to assure his people protection. State granaries in time of disaster, the remission of taxes for just cause, the building of dykes and dredging of waterways, the prevention of theft, are all measures signed to strengthen family and communal property. Yet the state is constantly to fight against the commune's encroachments, and in this subtle duel it is the commune that usually wins. The state for all judicial rights loses out in the actual control of property. The unit of ownership is as ever the family, not the individual. It happens because group interests invariably dominate, the character of Annamite property has not the absolute and egotistical character given in France by the Napoleonic Code. Property, like imperial authority, is indeed the individual's life on this earth, has kept its character of stewardship. It is a temporary delegation upon good behaviour, and the Emperor is the intermediary by Heavenly dispensation. The payment of taxes and the cultivation of the land, as requisites for ownership, have created in Annam a tradition of industriousness which contrasts with the lethargy of most Oriental peoples. If the conditions of occupancy are not fulfilled, the state simply takes back its own and cedes it once again to a more worthy tenant. The state may, on the grounds of public utility, confiscate property without indemnity. The fear that large properties might constitute a danger to the state has made Annam, like France, a country of small proprietors. In Annam's political economy the word capital is synonymous with work and savings: ownership of land does not constitute capital, since in the final analysis it belongs to the Emperor. Although Annam is the incarnation of Fourier's dream of a country where capital belongs to the worker—

>r property was land with the exception of a few skves  
 —the needs of  
 ic people have not been completely satisfied. Usury for  
 centuries has  
 ad a noxious grip upon the country. No banks existed,  
 no large-scale  
 idustries or commercial operations. A fourteenth-  
 century attempt to  
 itroduce paper money into the country failed. The  
 patriarchal sim-  
 licify of Annam's economy might be theoretically  
 enviable were it  
 ot for the widespread usur^ and misery, extreme to  
 the point of  
 iarvation,

In an abstract appraisal of Annamite legislation one  
 must remember  
 lat social utility is the point of departure and not the  
 guarantee of  
 idividual rights. What most offends the Westerner—  
 the confusion  
 ot the separation of powers; the principle of collective  
 responsibility;  
 le bolstering of arbitrary authority within the family,  
 commune, and  
 bate; an inequality before the law that is translated  
 into the most